



# Christian Order

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## THE MARCH NUMBER

Very sincere apologies are extended to all readers who received their March number of *Christian Order* somewhat later than usual. The delay was due entirely to the loss in the post between this country and Ireland of two parcels of addressed envelopes. These were subsequently recovered. If, by chance, any readers have not received the March issue of *Christian Order*, will they be kind enough, please, to let the Editor know. A copy will be sent by return of post.

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# Christian Order

EDITED BY

Paul Crane SJ

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## No Reason for Reproach

THE EDITOR

IN comment, early this year, on the Church in England and the mainland of Europe, Father Sean Kearney — Chairman of the National Conference of Priests of England and Wales — had things to say which led me to believe that he may have fallen for what has been well described as the myth of the sleeping Church. According to this myth, the Church, like Rip van Winkle, was asleep for the hundred years that preceded Vatican II. It needed Pope John's initiative to rouse it from its lethargy. According to Father Kearney, the Church in England would appear to be still unroused. By contrast with mainland Europe, it is still limping along in its ordinariness, divorced from reality. "For most European priests", said Father Kearney (*Catholic Herald* 5/1/73), "the Church in England simply lacks credibility. They see us as Christians who tend to ride the crest of every wave. We do not convey to them any sense of vitality or Christian enthusiasm; they see us as living in an artificial world of respectable gentility".

My answer to this is, so much the worse for them. With due respect to Father Kearney, it could very well be that European priests see clergy and laity in this country



as lacking vitality simply because they do not know what vitality really is. In their ignorance they have confused it with excitement and because, quite rightly, they see no excitement in the unobtrusive performance by a devoted priest of the duties that go with his priesthood, they think of him as without vitality. In reality, he is full of it. He must be, for a priest must be very much alive to the needs of his people, vitally concerned with those needs, if he is to minister to them day in and day out without thought for himself and without complaint.

In the priests and laity of this country who are faithful day in and day out to the dull ordinariness of lives lived daily for God's sake, you have the true glory of England's Catholicism, a sign for all who have eyes to see that the Church in this country is truly dynamic, if you want to apply such a word to their continuous and unstinted effort. The double-speak which denies this comes easily to the lips of those whose confused and, very often, jejune minds have long since robbed words of their true meaning. Their advice should not be heeded. The fact that the Church in this country lacks credibility in their eyes should be seen as reason not for reproach, but for heartfelt congratulation. If the meeting of European priests in 1974 is to be held in this country, it is devoutly to be hoped that Father Kearney and his fellow priests who attend it, will make this abundantly clear to their brethren from across the Channel.

Good priests like Father Kearney should not allow themselves to be knocked off balance by the excited outpourings of continental clerics. Let them listen by all means and let them do so with courtesy and respect, but let them realise at the same time that the clergy and laity of England and Wales have a great deal of which they can be justly proud; not least their martyr ancestry, their unyielding devotion to the Holy See and the unremitting faithfulness with which so many of them pursue the dull ordinariness of their daily round. For this I salute them. In this lies great hope for the future of the Church in England and Wales.

The Author of this article is Headmaster of Saint John Almond Secondary School, Huyton. He speaks against a background of great experience in the matter, particularly, of the teaching of religion.

What he has to say, therefore, of the "New Catechetics" and the "New Religion" is of capital importance. Coupled with this month's instalment of the series on "The Dutch Sedition", readers will see what grave reason there is for believing that the Faith of Catholics is being destroyed before our very eyes in schools, training colleges and catechetical centres by the enemies of Christ — mostly priests and nuns, I regret to say — within the Church. Until these have been turned out of their present posts the Faith of our children is in grave jeopardy.

## Catechetics: Presenting the Faith

M. A. McGARVEY

"I profess that I undoubtedly and firmly believe all the articles of the Roman Catholic Faith, and for the truth of any of them, by the assistance of God, I am willing to die; and I had rather die than doubt of any point of faith taught by our holy mother, the Roman Catholic Church." (St. John Plessington, on the scaffold)

"Faith means to say YES to God's revelation. It would be wrong to view this revelation as a vast system of cut and dried truths and propositions. It is primarily a message and a light, God's light on our life, on history, on good

and evil, on death, on God himself, on love as the last word.”  
(*The Dutch Catechism*)

**F**ACING his judges and executioners 400 years ago, the martyr was called upon to state exactly what he believed. He had been arrested for his ministry, his preaching, his teaching. (It was not yet the day of “modern man come of age”, of “a faith that speaks to us as we live, love, doubt hope, and believe in today’s world” — to quote the blurb on the *Dutch Catechism*.) No: *exact answers* were demanded: cut and dried, if you wish. And giving clear, exact answers the martyr gave his very life in witness to Christ’s truth. Indeed, had he contented himself with a general “YES to revelation”, to a “light, a message” (unspecified) it is doubtful if he would have won the martyr’s crown at all. Those martyrs “are a shining example of that genuine faith, which will have nothing to do with ambiguity or false compromise in whatever is held as sacred; a faith that is never afraid to declare its convictions.” (Allocution of Pope Paul VI at the Consistory for the Canonisation of the Forty Martyrs; May 18th 1970.)

### *Disturbing Trends in Catechetics*

Those in the Church today who have been entrusted with the task of presenting the Faith share the privilege with the martyrs of being Christ’s witnesses. And it is the duty of these parents, priests, teachers, catechists to present the Faith in its entirety. The question now arises: has the catechetical movement over recent years been faithful to its task? Have those responsible for this work always presented the Faith in its entirety? Have they avoided all ambiguity? There are few in the Church who would claim that this fidelity which is so essential has always characterised religious education in recent years. There have been many disturbing trends and features in the field of catechetics. No one denies that good and valuable work has been done by devoted priests and teachers. However,



while it is right to praise what has been good and helpful, it is most necessary to call attention to those things which are harmful and dangerous to the Faith of our people, young and old.

For instance, on 7th January, 1973, a Catholic mother told me of a meeting she attended at her child's school. "I was so upset at what a priest and a teacher said at that meeting, so worried that my child's religious education was in their hands that I went home and cried the whole night". The teacher in question, this mother reported, told the children that he does not go to (Sunday) Mass if he doesn't feel like it; that he cannot believe in the Virgin Birth; cannot, or finds it hard, to believe in the Ascension — "there could be other explanations" — and "think of the other side of the abortion question". Another mother, herself a teacher, told me that she had challenged this same teacher nearly two years ago: "Is it true that you do not deal with 'basics' in your religious lesson"? "What do you mean by 'basics'?" "Basics, like the Mass, Sacraments, Commandments . . ." The teacher admitted that he did not deal with these subjects. In this land of ours all is far from well as regards the religious education of our children.

Elsewhere in the world there is similar trouble. In America, for instance, some Catholic parents wrote an "open letter" to the priests of their diocese: "Can you know the agony of parents, with Catholic roots like iron claws deep within them, who have come squarely to the reality that they cannot in conscience any longer support the kind of 'religious' education that has taken over the schools that they and their fathers built with great and willing sacrifice". It is no longer possible to ignore the fact that, despite the real progress that has been made in religious education, there have appeared in the catechetical movement, in this country and abroad, errors which are crying out to be identified and eradicated with all possible speed.



## *The Truths which are to be Taught*

"The errors which are not infrequently noted in catechetics today" — I quote from the General Catechetical Directory published by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy — "can be avoided only if one starts with the correct way of understanding the nature and purpose of catechesis, and also the truths which are to be taught by it, with due account being taken of those to whom catechesis is directed, and of the conditions in which they live". Be it noted that this General Catechetical Directory actually refers to *the truths which are to be taught*. This official document has been approved, confirmed by the Vicar of Christ. Pope Paul has ordered it to be published (11th April, 1971). And if what it clearly sets forth for the guidance and instruction of everyone concerned with catechetics, presenting the faith in its entirety, is faithfully observed the goal of catechesis, the very purpose of religious education will be reached. The errors will be eradicated. The entire treasure of the Christian message will be presented. Again I quote the General Catechetical Directory: " . . . so that the People of God may be nourished by it and live from it".

It might well be asked: What more is there to say on this matter? Has not the Holy See made perfectly clear how the Faith is to be presented, and the necessity of presenting it in its entirety? The answer to these questions adds up to this: when a fresh start has to be made, the house "swept and garnished", errors rectified — it is useful, even necessary, to look back over the past and see what has gone wrong, and discover the reasons for the mistakes. In this way future errors may be eliminated, while everyone must surely be more careful in the future, more critical, less ready to go along with the latest novelty. And again, as with the Documents of Vatican II, so with the General Catechetical Directory: there are some who actually claim that the Directory sets the seal of approval on all they have been doing in the field of catechetics.

Certainly no "experts" that I know of have admitted any errors.

### *Brother Gabriel Moran on Religious Education*

Consider, for instance, what one of the most widely-quoted *experts* in catechetics on both sides of the Atlantic has to say on religious education: "Could it be possible that it is paradoxically true that the best way to teach religion is not to teach religion at all, but to teach literature, social science, or art in the best possible way" (Brother Gabriel Moran, *Design for Religion*). And on the same page: "It is very often the best prepared teachers who are holding discussions about peace, poverty, or pollution. They are hard put to justify how their class can be called a religious class since they practically never discuss God, Christ, church, sacraments, or commandments; or when these words come up the references are as likely to be negative as positive. The teachers instinctively feel however that not only is this approach the best way for them to teach religion but that it is the only way".

This same "theologian" (who said of Pope Paul's "Credo" "it just doesn't say anything") continues in his *Design for Religion*, "The power that is attributed to the church *magisterium* is, to say the least, problematic. In any case, it bears little connection to what today is called teaching. Making the bishops the church's teachers on the basis of Christ's commands to the apostles is little short of equivocation". And again: "The assumption that there is a collection of truths revealed by God that are dispensed by the church is slowly disappearing. The corollary to that belief, namely, that within the church the bishops are the dispensers of such truths, goes on unchecked". And Brother Moran is quoted in almost every catechetical publication there is; his books adorn the shelves of our Catholic bookshops everywhere.

If what has been said above is disturbing, there is a mass of catechetical material more distressing still. Opening

one periodical made one think of what it is like to lift a stone which has been lying undisturbed for years. In this magazine, priests wrote: "Theologians are reluctant to say 'Jesus is God' full stop, because most of the faithful usually misunderstand it: they take the 'is' to have the same meaning which it has in ordinary speech": "the gospels are entirely human documents": "A gospel is not a life of Christ. It does not claim to report accurately what Jesus said and did": "Jesus was limited because that is human. He was limited in power, in health, in knowledge, in foresight, in the understanding of a situation, he needed to think things out as we must. And this included his purpose in life, his own role, his own mission."; "If the future was for him an open book with success infallibly crowning his work how can we speak of him as a man like us"?: "The virgin birth would seem to remain an open question; it is, in any case, of secondary importance". "Jesus' miracles are not proofs of anything certainly not of his divinity . . . so our first question should not be, what actually happened? Did he really turn water into wine? Did he really walk on the water? Our first and main question should be, what does it mean to me? What is the point of the miracle story of the water at Cana?" I must ask, at this moment, how in God's name did such people reach and hold down positions of responsibility in as vital an area as Catholic education?

It must have become clear that there has developed in the catechetical movement an amazing degree of freedom of self-expression. This new freedom seems to extend to any one and everyone authorising them to criticise and attack any doctrine, teaching or ruling in the church. The more celebrated rebels make tours, lecturing to priests, teachers, and nuns. I heard, for instance, Hans Kung when he was the guest of a catechetical centre. His snide remarks about the church, the pope, "structures" etc. were received with peals of laughter. Nuns held up microphones to record every word. It was announced afterwards that tapes were available. Needless to say, Fr. Kung was appropriately dressed, complete in civilian collar and tie.

This liberty to "knock" authority and the authoritative teachings of the Church extends to ordinary lay people also. In fact, those who show a particular skill are often called "theologians". One liberty must not be taken, however. Those who criticise the catechetical "experts" are accused of "going against the spirit of the Council", or "hindering renewal". And yet, is it not essential that ordinary Catholic people should express their concern, their distress at what they see as an erosion of the Faith?

### *The "New Religion"*

It has been said that opposition among a large number of teachers to the catechetical movement in recent years stems from fear or suspicion of the unknown or the unfamiliar. This is far from true. Initially the majority of teachers were only too ready and anxious to study and try out new methods in religious teaching. But grave distrust arose once it became clear that many of those in charge of catechetics were hell-bent on changing *much more than methods*. Students arriving at one college for a catechetical course were told, "You have come here thinking you are going to learn new methods. You are *going to learn new doctrines*". And from this kind of training-course there spread throughout the Church apostles of what came to be known as the "new religion". Many of these people went about retailing, more or less faithfully, (some even elaborating) what they had learned at the feet of "masters". Some of these latter meanwhile, had — like the man who sowed cockle among the wheat — "gone their way". Worse still, others remained, "presenting us" — to quote Jacques Maritan — "with a picture of a sort of immanent apostacy, I mean determined to remain Christians at all costs".

I have been examining a series of catechetical books: "records of actual work carried out with children of Primary School age (4 - 11)". The first booklet is supposed to deal with Easter and Pentecost. Here the Resurrection is, to say the least, "soft pedalled" and the true story of Pente-



cost is *left out* — “young children are likely to invest it with an element of ‘magic’ which is totally undesirable”. We are not to speak of the “church” — the children will think of the building. We are to speak of “the friends of Jesus”. Yet, later in the same book: “Next a study was made of the Church in Holland and its links with the Church in our country”. It seems the children were to visit Holland, so they wrote to the bishop of the diocese there. This gave an opportunity to discuss the role of the bishop! So, children who couldn’t be given the true story of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost were presumed to be able to discuss the *role of the bishop*. And in the introduction to one of the booklets teachers are advised to put over the idea that “Christianity is essentially teaching about life in *this world*”.

There is no doubt about the general trend in much of what some catechists have been successfully advocating — to reduce drastically what little children learn about the Faith in the infant and primary schools. The creation, the fall of the angels, original sin, guardian angels, prayer to Our Lady and the saints, the divinity of Christ, the Redemption, and many other doctrines are at most merely hinted at. There is much talk of the limits to what little children can understand. What is ignored is the fact that there is so much that can be appreciated *especially by little children*. There is not the slightest justification for ignoring Christ’s miracles, and still less for trying to explain them away. If, for instance, I tell children that the little girl whom Christ raised from the dead *was asleep* I might just as well omit the event altogether. *She was dead* — just as the 5,000 were miraculously *raised*. We simply have to face the fact: children who can believe the truth that after the Consecration in the Mass there are no longer present bread and wine but the Body and Blood of Christ are capable of appreciating — certainly within their limited intellectual capacity — other essential truths of the Faith.

In Catholic schools at the present time there are two kinds of teachers. There are those who remember "the bad old days of the catechism". These, in general accept that there was, perhaps, too much emphasis in the past on "learning by rote". They also hold that it was a great mistake to cut out completely such learning. But these teachers fulfil what they see to be their duty. They present the faith in its entirety, keeping in mind the age, ability, and general background of their pupils. Then there are the younger teachers, recently qualified. Of these some have managed to remain "sound" using all new and valuable aids and methods but faithful to their duty to *teach the Faith*. But many others are the products of training which is far from sound. Some learned little or no doctrine when they were at school, and were given at the college of education what amounts to a course in speculative theology.

Things have come to a pretty pass when students arriving on teaching practice in the schools have to be told: "We teach the Catholic Faith here". In one college of education all students are issued with the *Dutch Catechism* — but they are not given the Supplement which calls attention to the doubtful, misleading, ambiguous matter contained in that Catechism. Teachers have reported some very dubious teaching by students. One heard the student laboriously putting over "transignification when speaking of the Eucharist. Another student told the children, "The Mass is like a tea-party". Some of the students, fortunately, are aware of what is happening. But they say, "We have to teach 'this stuff' if we're going to pass our examination". And this is hard to believe, but it is true: at a discussion on *Mysterium Fidei* a nun described the subject as 'irrelevant', and a newly qualified teacher declared, "As far as I'm concerned, the hosts left over after Communion could be trampled on; Communion for me is something personal".

It must be clear from what has been said here that

something very serious has happened over these years of "renewal" in Catholic education. Clearly there was a need for the *General Catechetical Directory*. It has been a painful necessity to indicate some of the errors, to give some examples of how many engaged in Catholic education have lost their way. The Faith just has not been presented in its entirety. And there are clear signs that we are far from being "out of the wood" even now. There are indeed indications of some further dangers. One is the tendency to allow Catholic education to move more and more into the realms of modernism and secularism.

### *Are Catholic Secondary Schools Necessary?*

Some Catholics are beginning to question the need for Catholic secondary schools. Apart from financial considerations, some advocate our older children taking their place in "ordinary" schools — believing they can act as a "leaven", and influence non-Catholics by their example of Christian living. But let this happen, and our young people must come under influences wholly harmful to their Faith. What sort of teachers will they have in these secular schools? What ideas will be put over to the young people? A recent *Times Education Supplement*, "Extra", gives a hint: "The typical modern institution of education is secular, that is, it is neutralist in regard to religious or ideological commitment. This is one reason why some traditional religious education has seemed more and more irrelevant to pupils in secondary schools." Again: "Religious education should be open rather than dogmatic". And the same journal refers to "the contribution to religious education that can be made by humanist and agnostic teachers in the primary school". And again: "The question, What ought pupils to know? must give place to the question, How can they be equipped to deal with religious questions and to understand religious phenomena?" Now if it be asked, what has all this to do with catechetics? the answer can be found in the writings of some catechetical "experts" — not least of these being Brother Gabriel Moran.

## Authority and Experience

The key word to another danger in the field of catechetics is "Experience". An article in the *Sower* (July 1972) speaks of past work in catechetics. It refers to two methods (neither of which, it seems, has been quite successful) — namely, the catechism phase, and the kerygmatic approach. The writer goes on: "Today, whilst retaining the good elements of the two earlier approaches we have entered upon a third stage of religious education which may be called catechesis from life experience". So far, so good. But read on: "The new emphases seem to throw into question some traditional assumptions both theological and educational so as to cause bewilderment and alarm in some quarters. For a long time we used to hold the somewhat static view of revelation as a body of truths made known by God and passed on from generation to generation as a precious heritage" . . . "Jesus is man receiving revelation as well as God bestowing revelation. In the transformation of the man Jesus from a sinful human condition to a new risen human/divine life God has shown the transformation he intends for every one of us".

Now, it is not intended to deny that there is such a thing as *experience*. In fact, the *General Catechetical Directory* speaks of experience: "Experience begets concerns and questionings, hopes and anxieties, reflections and judgments; these merge and there results a certain desire to steer the human way of life". But nowhere does the *Directory* deny that there is a body of truths, revelation. Nowhere does it deny that this precious heritage is passed on from generation to generation. In fact the *Directory* says this: "Thus it is that experience serves in the examination and acceptance of *the truths which are contained in the deposit of revelation*" (*italics added*).

The danger, therefore, is clear. If catechists follow the line indicated by some of their "experts" the next stage in catechetics will be more harmful than the last. "What



takes precedence, experience or set forms of beliefs?" asks Brother Moran. And he quotes a theologian: "On his return to this country (after visiting Catholic catechetical centres throughout Europe) the question he asks in his essay is: What functions has authority in Roman Catholicism if education becomes experience centred"? The good Brother sees what may (and I believe *should*) happen: "The experience of the student is used as a jumping off point to teach the Bible and Christian doctrine . . . experience is trivialised to such an extent that to call this approach experience-centred is inaccurate". The question must now be answered: are catechists going to follow the General Catechetical Directory in this matter of experience: "Experience, considered in itself, must be illumined by the light of revelation". Or are they going to follow the treacherous road of experience which is signposted: "There is no body of truths made known by God, no precious heritage which is entrusted to Christ's Church and handed on from generation to generation".

Some of the errors — and it is stressed that only *some* is an important word here — which have arisen in the catechetical movement in recent years have been pointed out. The purpose in doing so has been to alert everyone concerned with the religious education of children and young people, to encourage a more critical approach to the whole subject — methods, content, textbooks, syllabus. It is hoped that what has been said will itself be examined, even criticised. But most important of all, it is hoped that the greatest attention will be given to the *General Catechetical Directory*. The *Directory* was prepared and then reviewed by a special theological commission and by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. To quote from it again: "The intent of this *Directory* is to provide the basic principles of pastoral theology — these principles have been taken from the *magisterium* of the Church, and in a special way from the Second General Vatican Council — by which pastoral action in the ministry of the word can be more fittingly directed and governed".

In this *Directory* published by the Holy See, every aspect of religious education has been examined. Recommendations and clear directions are given. In his little pamphlet, *Teaching the Faith* Cardinal Heenan stresses the importance for teachers to study the document thoroughly. One paragraph must certainly be of special interest to teachers: "Catechisms. The greatest importance must be attached to catechisms published by ecclesiastical authority. Their purpose is to provide, under a form that is condensed and practical, the witness of revelation and of Christian tradition as well as the chief principles which ought to be useful for catechetical activity, that is, for personal education in faith. The witness of tradition should be held in due esteem, and very great care must be taken to avoid presenting as doctrines of the Faith special interpretations which are only private opinions or the views of some theological school. The doctrine of the Church must be presented faithfully".

To sum up: good and valuable work has been done in catechetics. Unfortunately there have been many and various errors over the years. Now, in the words of the *Directory*, "It is prayerfully hoped that this document will be accepted and carefully studied and weighed, with attention to the pastoral needs of the individual and ecclesial communities. It is similarly hoped that this document will be able to stimulate new and more vigorous studies that faithfully respond to the needs of the ministry of the word and to the norms of the *magisterium* of the Church".

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# Readings at Mass

FRANCIS FENN, S.J.

**A**LTHOUGH the account of the Passion from St. John's Gospel on Good Friday is not strictly speaking a reading at Mass, most of you will no doubt hear it; and it is useful to compare it with the Passion from St. Mark assigned this year to the previous Sunday. I shall also refer to the gospel reading for the Sunday before that (April 8: John 12, 20-33), the last verses of which link it up with (and further explain) the saying on April 1st: "The Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him" (3, 14-15).

John sees these words fulfilled in the handing over of Jesus by the Jews to Pilate (18,32), which made sure that he would die by the Roman punishment of crucifixion. Thus he would be "lifted up" or exalted. This is no mere playing with words. In the life of the Blessed Trinity, the Son's relationship to the Father is one of self-giving love, a self-giving which involves no giving-up. But when, on our behalf and as our representative, he enters sinful humanity in order to lead us to his Father, his self-giving *does* become a giving-up (<sup>1</sup>): "being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross" (April 15, second reading). The Cross, which is his deepest humiliation, is at the same time his exaltation: "I have finished the work that you gave me to do" (17,4). "It is accomplished", he says as he dies (19,30) — in contrast to Mark's "loud cry" (15,37), which does not contradict John.

John's account of the Passion is thus the history of a triumph. He says nothing of the agony in the garden, though he knows of it (18,1; but see 12,27-28 for something similar). There is only the minimum of the indignities

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(1) E. Schillebeeckx: *Christ the Sacrament* (Sheed & Ward 1963), p. 32.

shown to Jesus by his captors, and the mockers on Calvary are not mentioned. There is no darkness at the time of the crucifixion, as in Mark (15,33). But if this is to be a true picture, his humiliation must be freely chosen. John emphasises this. Jesus gives himself up to arrest, on condition that his disciples be allowed to go free (18,4-9). His moment of death is itself freely chosen (19,28). We are reminded of his words when he is speaking of himself as the Good Shepherd (10,17-18).

Similarly, in the account of the trial before Pilate (to which John devotes much more space than Mark) the governor is told that he can only preside over what is to happen to Jesus because his Father wills it — because, as he said, his “hour” has come (12,23). What is behind the question of kingship, which figures so much in John’s account, is authority to judge — the divinely assigned prerogative of Christ (5,27). But his judgment is of a different kind: it has to do with truth (or “light”) and men’s attitude towards it (3,17-21). Implicitly, Jesus calls on Pilate to range himself on the side of truth. Pilate knows enough about Jesus to see that his teaching presents no threat to government security. He should have freed Jesus without more ado; instead, he takes refuge in a series of compromises which lead to the death of the Saviour. Indifference to the truth is tantamount to rejecting it. Pilate stands for the world of which Jesus had said: “Now sentence is being passed on this world” (12,31) in reference to his coming Passion. (“The prince of this world” in the second half of the verse is Satan, whose dominion over men the death of Christ will break.)

There is a final incident which only John recounts. It is about the breaking of the legs of the crucified men in order to hasten death. “When they came to Jesus, they found he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water.” The significance of this is shewn by quoting two texts from the Old Testament, the first of which (19,36) is a ritual instruction for the preparation of the Passover lamb



(Exodus 12,46). The flow of *blood* thus shows that "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1,29) has been truly sacrificed for our salvation (see my article for January p.27).

The other text is from the prophet Zechariah: "Over the House of David I will pour out a spirit of kindness and prayer. *They will look on the one whom they have pierced*; they will mourn for him as for an only son". A little later, the prophet adds "When that day comes, a fountain will be opened for the House of David". The words "They will look on" are used in John's sense of "see and understand". For him the Roman soldier symbolises the pagans who will come to Christ, as do the Greeks of 12,20, who wanted to "see" Jesus. They are answered in 12,32: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself". The crucified Jesus will be set before the world as its Saviour.

The *water*, symbol of the Holy Spirit, shows that the sacrifice is a rich source of grace. An earlier incident in this gospel may be recalled: Jesus cried out: "If any man is thirsty, let him come to me! Let the man come and drink who believes in me!" As Scripture says: From his breast shall flow fountains of living water. He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive; for the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified (7,37-39). In this text, it may be noted, the "fountains" (according to the oldest tradition) flow from Jesus himself, though a different punctuation makes them flow from the believer (as in RSV).

The Son of God could "give us the Holy Spirit only when his sonship is perfectly realised in his humanity too, which is only when he has fully and humanly given himself in love to the Father" (2), i.e. when he is "made perfect" (2nd reading, April 8) and glorified as man in the life of the Trinity.

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(2) *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 39.

# The Dutch Sedition

## 3. *The Dutch Pastoral Council: 2*

TRANSLATED BY ANGELA MEYRICK

### A: Away with the Religious

This is Angela Meyrick's translation of a report written by Michael van der Plas on the fifth session of the Dutch Pastoral Council, which was published in *Elseviers* for January 1970. The awful, secularist tone of the whole debate — its spiritual aridity — is brought out extremely well in this powerful piece of writing.

"I see", said the chairman, "that you are a nun". He caused hilarity. He spoke at the new session of the Dutch Pastoral Council in Noordwijckshout to one of the very few feminine religious who, in their habits, could be distinguished from "other women in the Church". Costumes and dresses constitute only one aspect of the adjustment crisis which besets many religious communities in the Catholic Church. This crisis, together with that in the priestly office, formed the main theme of a session of the Dutch Pastoral Council, which had been looked forward to with tension and worry. For there seemed to be dynamite in store. The absence of the Papal Nuncio (wrongly ascribed to the recommendation to break the coupling of priesthood and celibacy) already caused some uneasiness. This seemed strange, since those who, for a long time, would have nothing to do with the Nuncio, were now calling for his presence.

First however, came that discouraging, almost cheerless Monday, when the Religious were discussed; that is, the more than 40,000 men and women who, with their special vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, are united in all

sorts and sizes of community, in a life of contemplation, prayer, and service. These Nuns, Fathers and Brothers, once the pride of the "rich Roman" community in Holland, saw and heard themselves heavily criticized (even without their disclosing the wounds in their own communities). They even found themselves in that unenviable Duncce's corner where the question is asked as to whether their further existence as such has any point.

The problems are well known; that withdrawn "living-for-God" is hardly understood any more by a secularised world <sup>(1)</sup>; the spirituality of the various orders and congregations is scarcely recognised any more; many contemplatives now ask themselves what their usefulness is in life; the average age of religious communities is increasing; the number of new candidates presenting themselves is low; young people, particularly, begin to look on religious as "strange". What is more, heated discussions about minor rules and all sorts of institutions dominate many communities, taking the place of a real renewal of their spiritual life and service. It must have been painful for many to learn that the gulf between the religious and the "faithful-in-the-world" was so often and so emphatically stated at this session of the Pastoral Council to be wide open. This was explained in a very hard and sometimes almost unchristian way to the nuns, brothers and fathers by such sentences as: "Why do we actually have to talk about the Religious at all; we could equally well discuss the journalists". Or; "They are apparently expecting applause". As if the Dutch Catholic Community (not to mention others) has not had so very much to thank them for in all fields of care for the weak, the poor, the sick and the lonely. As if the many thousand of Holland's missionaries should ever be ashamed of their devotion to and work on development projects. In particular, many younger delegates appeared, in their passion for reform, to be blind to the history and accomplishments of the Religious. Delegate Coolen accused them of an uncritical conformism with

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(1) References in this paragraph are primarily to Holland.

the world and considered pointless the proposal of pastoral recommendations where they were concerned. Delegate Trees Blom feared that Religious seldom rose above a "peaceful loving bustle" with handicapped children. Guest Jan Bensen (who had been admitted into the hall to represent protesting young Religious and theological students), "unmasked" them as helpful to a Church which exists only for itself; he considered their unmarried state an aspect of repression and said, in passing, that he was angry at the Council for not criticising the Church as a "lumpish appendage of repressive society", and for just wishing to keep "the Church of yesterday" alive. His supporters, meeting in the chapel, accused the monasteries and convents, amongst other things, of supporting those who wished to retain differences in property-ownership at any price.

### *The Christian in the World*

But the whole debate finally concentrated on the central question, which was also touched on at the previous session of the Dutch Council; about the task of the Christian in the secularised world. Father Schoonenberg admitted this at once when he said that the same crisis of Faith existed amongst Religious as amongst the "churchfolk" — a crisis which he nevertheless considered hopeful, since it did away with an image of God which demanded a choice between God *or* man, God *or* the world and, on the contrary, forced one to look for and find God in the world. On the one side, there is the loud call to the "solidaire" deed, to radical service; on the other side, there remains the question of the motivation of this service. There was tension between two continually repeated opinions. One says that radical service must not suffer any delay, and that it hardly matters from where the inspiration comes (Ché and Mao, then, seem, at least for the most progressive Catholics, to offer as valuable motivation as the Gospel); the other puts the question of inspiration first and, therefore, con-



siders the historic God-Man Christ, with his word and example, to be indispensable. As far as this latter opinion is concerned, one of the most compelling things was said by a Brother of Taizé: "One can only be 'brother' of, and for, all people with the help of powers not present in man himself", and "If the signs of God disappear from our lives, what have we won?" Or again, as Brother Tullemans said especially to the youth, "*Please!* may we carry on as hitherto?"

In the meantime, the Council had decided not to aim at a radical break with the history and traditions of religious life. Recommendations, therefore were made more in the direction of a gradual adaptation, as distinct from complete reformation. In addition, a clear appeal was made to young people to experiment with new forms of community life; the Dutch Council stated its hope that adequate provision would be made for such experimentation. The request of the Carmelite, M. Gemmeke (drs.), seemed very important, "that the Church, in its crisis of faith, should make an appeal to the Religious to try to create a new culture of religious expression, a new 'modern devotion', a new mysticism of the Low Countries". However, at the end of the first day's sitting there still remained the echo of the words of the first speaker of the morning session, the Protestant professor, Dr. A. Bronkhorst, who, after reading the draft report, remarked that he had a feeling mainly of sympathy for the Religious. If the report itself was too peppery for the Religious themselves, this was hardly apparent during this sitting; and the ache remained; a feeling of poverty dominated the atmosphere, of spiritual aridity, in which the appeal of drs. Gemmeke, aimed high as it was, seemed for the time being seemed incapable of achievement. There was a widespread feeling of uncertainty. Symptomatic of the whole tone of the discussion was the pronouncement of one of the delegates: "I don't know what to do about my remarks, but they come from the heart". Or this; "I speak for myself, I think".

When the debate was resumed, a higher level of discussion was reached — to the relief of many; although that uneasy feeling expressed at the previous sitting. (Is this now all that the Dutch Church Province can produce?), never quite disappeared. On the agenda, further, was the draft-report; "Towards a Fruitful and Renewed Functioning of Priestly Duties"; in other words, about the place and task of the priest as guardian of souls. One could hardly escape the impression that here a large section of the Council delegates were striving for only one thing — to get as quickly as possible to the seventh and last recommendation in this voluminous report, the loaded sentence under VII, 3: "The obligation of celibacy should be removed". Obviously, they wanted to "get down to business". Then it came, preceded by an expansive "situation sketch" of the office-holder in the Church, plus an ample number of other recommendations. However, it seemed that, for a large section of the assembly all problems would be apparently solved if that single recommendation in VII, 3 were to be accepted. How could one explain otherwise the impatience with which so many delegates followed the fundamental discussions beforehand? The debate was about very reasonable matters — the consciousness of Faith of priests, their capability, new forms of priestly service, structures and so on. But many showed annoyance as soon as and as long as, the *basis* of faith was under discussion and practical recommendations sought under this head. Delegations from various dioceses had expressed the wish that the meeting "would avoid discussion of priestly office at theological level". This was on three grounds; "Firstly to keep the discussions understandable for all present, secondly, because many had not prepared themselves for such a discussion and, thirdly, because many present did not feel competent enough". This was — and one may say, fortunately — just too much for a number of those present. Speakers such as the professors Haarsma, van Doorn and van Leewen, as well as the "very-much-to-the-point speaker", H. van der Meer, S.J., and Cardinal Alfrink, wondered whether there was not too much "very Low-

Church" and shallow talk about the (Catholic) Church, described as "the linking-up of several people around the Gospel"; as also about the pastor of souls ("as if he were no more than a humanist counsellor"). Was there not, someone wondered, too little said about the fact that the deepest meaning of official authority in the Church is that "the Church is given to us". Was there not, another asked, too much of "taking only from the Gospel what suits us"? And was not a priest even "*accused*" of preaching the whole of that Gospel? Is enough said about a priest if he is only depicted in the role of "a leader in life — an inspirer"? Professor Haarsma said, "We should have the courage to say that the priest is a man of God, whose task and mission is given by God; all the more since otherwise a dangerous degradation of the office would be threatened". These speakers, uneasy about the theological basis of the various recommendations, hardly got a chance; no support at all. In the (naturally understandable) haste to obtain quick practical results, a majority, so it seemed, had had enough of these reflections. Or, as one delegate, Visser, said: "When I hear all those theologians talking I wonder what it is all about".

### *The Council is not Impressed*

The Bishops' Declaration, copies of which were handed out at the meeting, could be considered as demonstrating a very careful disavowal beforehand. The draft report, they said, was indeed, no more than a draft and exhibited all kinds of gaps; as this was a "Council" it would be sensible merely to make recommendations. In other words the bishops obviously reserved the right to examine these recommendations. later, on their merits; and they pointed out that one should always be conscious of the "theological implications which may lie behind". In any case, there came a clear answer from a new, unexpected guest at the Council — Dean Joosten — speaking in the name of 940 priests who, he said "have bound themselves body and soul to Christ and

His Church". He gave their basic objections to the report on the priesthood, in particular to the separation of the priestly function from the rule of celibacy. "The Holy Spirit", he said, "does not work only in the twentieth century, but also in the previous nineteen centuries". The Council was not impressed. So it returned speedily to its own more and more involved deliberations.

At a certain moment Cardinal Alfrink said with regard to a stated proposal: "It is so vague that I would not know what to do about it . . . but perhaps I don't need to do anything". One may imagine that this could also be the reaction of the Episcopate later on to many of the Dutch Council's pronouncements about the priesthood — because vagueness and spiritual poverty characterised its papers and discussions.

It was otherwise with the clearest recommendation of all mentioned above — VII,3; that about the desired uncoupling of priestly office and celibacy. This recommendation obliged the Dutch Hierarchy to think very seriously about its policy in the very near future — with, on both sides, a very attentively waiting audience; on the one, Rome (and the Universal Church); on the other, their own, divided Church Province.

### **B: The Priests' Declaration**

Above, Michael van der Plas refers to the intervention on January 6th, 1970, at the fifth session of the Dutch Pastoral Council, of Canon Joosten on behalf of 940 Dutch priests, who signed the document. Below, we give Angela Meyrick's translation of the main points of this document.

We have come here to express our anxiety over the developments at this Pastoral Council. On 17th November 1966, it was announced by the Dutch bishops as "the product of the Second Vatican Council and a continuation of the development in the direction there indicated". All the people were going to be involved. Therefore, the idea was to furnish



a healthy democratic contribution to a movement within the Church, based on the Catholic Faith as described by Vatican II and faith in the Catholic approach to life as there redefined. Well, we have been forced to conclude that those who are responsible for this pastoral Council have taken very little trouble to ensure that the contribution it makes is democratic, and that this Council has become an instrument for damaging Vatican II and the Faith it defined. Unfortunately, this damage from the Dutch Council has been accompanied by an equally damaging propaganda amongst our Catholic people, which has come from another source: they were shocked already by the conduct of so many priests, who thought that they could break their vows as they wished and who stirred up confusion through their instructions in the Catechism and their preaching. In this manner, the crisis in the Faith, which is connected with the rapid changes in the Church and the new wealth in the country, which is offered to us and forced upon us, was not dealt with by the Church, as we had a right to expect, but was, on the contrary, *promoted* by it.

#### *1. The Democratic Character of the Dutch Pastoral Council*

This Pastoral Council has become famous in the entire world, for the reason that, in it, bishops confer casually with ordinary people, and because every member may freely express his opinion. This is really democratic and it has our approval. If the more fundamental demands for a real democracy had also been met, then this Pastoral Council could have become a blessing for the entire world. The opposite has been the case.

a) The assertion, which was often repeated here, that this gathering represented Catholic Holland, has great importance as regards propaganda, but we fail to see how anybody with any knowledge of Catholic Holland can maintain that this assertion is correct. In our opinion, this is adequately demonstrated by the fact that for instance at the third session of this Council only three of its members defended that interpretation of the Faith commonly accepted by the great majority of our people and

which has always been seen as the normal Catholic interpretation of the Faith. Not one of these three had been elected as a delegate. They had been appointed by the Hierarchy. During the Council, there have been many remarks made which were in conflict with the Faith, or which showed a lack of care for the Faith. During the fourth session of this Pastoral Council the proportion of those who defended our common understanding of the Faith to those who attacked it, hardly changed.

Therefore we are convinced of the necessity of stating quite clearly that this gathering cannot be considered as really representative of our Catholic people. This gathering has not been democratically chosen, and yet it keeps maintaining that it represents the Catholic people of Holland. We regret that our publicity media have not called attention to this.

b) From the third session of this Council onwards, methods have been used which are not in keeping with the tenets of sound democracy. At the first two sessions, the *draft report on authority* was not considered; at the third session of the Council it was announced that it was not to be discussed at all, but just to be taken for granted as background for future Council resolutions; at the fourth session the same high-handed method was used; and again at the fifth session.

Even the *draft report on the priesthood* was obstructed. It was announced that, at this fifth session theological questions would not be discussed, yet these questions lay at the basis of the draft report. According to Father Goddiijn (Chief Organiser of the Council): "This would be an obstacle to the discussions. It was not necessary to state explicitly the theological implications. The general gathering was not competent for theological discussions". This is not true democracy. A council statement, drawn up by a one-sided commission, is accepted by all (who do not even attempt to discuss it). *This we consider manipulation on the part of the Council leaders.* If the meeting is not able to judge the theological background of these reports, then, either it is incompetent to discuss them or the language

of the reports themselves is too obscure. The declaration concludes: "We are convinced that this assembly cannot be seen as an example of healthy democracy within the Catholic Church, and thus it can make no claim to speak in the name of Catholic Holland".

## II. *The Truth of the Faith and its Practice at this Council*

a) The Dutch Pastoral Council was called to promote the thinking of Vatican II among all our people and so the people were asked to contribute to its expenses. It is well known how Mgr. Moors (retired bishop of Roermond) stated emphatically at the *third session* that the draft report under discussion, with the resolution passed by the assembly, was clearly in conflict with the letter and spirit of Vatican II. No-one denied or refuted this. On the contrary, the Council continued to undermine Catholic practice as recommended by Vatican II. The Dutch Pastoral Council was not fulfilling the purpose for which it had been ostensibly organised and financed. "It would be almost impossible to believe this if one had not experienced it oneself". At the third session, Fr. Simonis just managed—with support from the Protestant element — to deflect some resolutions to a more orthodox line.

b) The draft report for the fourth session was also in conflict with the letter and spirit of Vatican II. Not a single bishop commented clearly on this. The speakers were compelled to keep to certain points; not permitted to mention fundamentals. So, at this fourth session, a new element appeared, which we may describe as "directed democracy". This was to be the case also at the following, fifth session.

c) Regarding this fifth session (on priesthood and the religious life), the draft report is again in contradiction with the spirit and letter of Vatican II.

I. *The concept of the Church* itself is one-sided — it does not fit in with Catholic belief and is unacceptable

to the ordinary Roman Catholic and to the Eastern Orthodox Christian.

2. With regard to the Catholic *priesthood*, there is no mention of the special character conferred on bishops and priests by their consecration.

3. The task of the *bishop* is reduced to that of a sort of contact-man between Christian people; further, leadership of the diocese is to be given mainly to the vicars general (a minor curia run by people who criticize so sharply the Curia in Rome!). "Would it not be better to rearrange the structures of the dioceses so that the bishops once again become real leaders and teachers, in living contact with all their priests and people?"

4. The *Pope* is hardly mentioned at all. Some say his place in the future will be as a sort of secretary-general of united Catholic Churches. In the fourth session, the Pope was ignored completely.

5. In the report there is hardly any indication of how the compilers regard *the Gospel and Christ Himself*. We find instead triumphalistic criticism of what is specifically Catholic and a one-sided negative regard for the piety of our Catholic past. "In short we do not see in this report a sound basis for discussion of the priesthood".

### III. Our Attitude to All This

"This protest is born of necessity . . . We ourselves are not guiltless either. . ."

A. *It is not fair to say we are untra-conservative*. We only ask what every Catholic should appreciate — faithfulness to Catholic dogma and the Credo; recognition of the real authority of the Pope; church affairs to be loyally handled according to the guide-lines of Vatican II.

1. We are *all in favour of church renewal*, in accordance with Vatican II and with respect for authority.

2. We recognise that the bond between *priesthood*

*and celibacy* is not a matter of dogma, and that on certain occasions it may be necessary to waive it. But we regret that here there has been hardly any discussion by experts; people have taken refuge in an "unhealthy mode of discussion". The impression is thereby given that private "insights" are much more important than the authority of Pope or Council; little or no attention is paid to the biblical and religious values of freely chosen celibacy; propaganda is made by doubtful arguments against celibacy, first of all among the young men who are preparing for ordination. Many have not recognised any value in the obligation of priestly celibacy freely accepted. The method of *faits-accomplis* is practised to reach what is not obtainable immediately. People are terrified of the very idea of a life of prayer and sacrifice and the calm rejection of certain joys and forms of association, which do not suit the celibate life. Further, the publicity-media today, more than ever following the taste of the masses and publishing everything sensational, join in the game with eagerness, finding the negative much more newsworthy than the positive — thus helping to shape a climate of opinion in which people want to force a decision *now*. We consider this unjust. Our Catholic people have not been properly consulted and many are deeply shocked by what is going on. Little account is taken of the bond which binds us to the Universal Church. In these circumstances it is irresponsible to make a sweeping decision. This is not sound democracy.

*We ask the bishops* to have the courage to refuse a definite decision before they have first and foremost discussed the matter with those priests who stand by their solemn promise and are really attached to their celibate state. We ask them, too, to seek objective information from the genuine opinion of the Catholic laity before they make a decision. If they act now, the impression is given that the bishops are letting themselves be forced to a decision by pressure groups. This will not be a sign of healthy openness and sound progressiveness. In a really



free decision regarding matters of Faith, the factors should be: calm counsels, openness to all aspects of the truth, readiness for patience and sacrifice and, in these circumstances above all, prayer, which should play a much greater role than — as far as we know — it has played throughout this whole movement.

3. In church affairs we are also open to ecumenical strivings. We appreciate what has been done; but, is it "a service to unity to heedlessly do away with conceptions and human values which are specifically Catholic"? How then can we enrich other churches? And do we not create a further gulf between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches? And even between ourselves and faithful Protestants, by creating the impression that we only value what connects us with secular humanism — with its sights on this world alone? (Even the latest meeting of the Dutch Synod of the Reformed Church has reservations about this.)

4. Too often at this Pastoral Council it seems to be forgotten that the Church is a community of believers and that Faith has to do with the truth regarding God — the truth of Christ which makes us free — and that Revelation must be preserved and lived in love. If the authority of the Church is not maintained, then the freedom of our Catholic people is being attacked by people who have no longer any respect for the Church's authority and even deny the dogmas of the Church. The complaint is heard more and more often from Catholic parents that their children are being robbed of their Faith by teachers at Catholic schools who no longer subscribe to Catholic doctrine and discipline. These children give up regular prayer and attendance at Sunday Mass and lose their Catholic attitude in sexual matters. There is also great anxiety about the preparation of young men for the priesthood. It is not surprising that, against all this, protests are heard and that, as the bishops do not concern themselves with these protests, groups are being formed to counteract these tendencies and limit the evil. Otherwise the unity of the Church will be destroyed. We mean to

ask our bishops to take measures that the priesthood should no longer be misused in order to undermine Catholic belief.

B. *Sound progressiveness.* We do not protest but approve of initiatives (a) to help to alleviate poverty, ignorance and sickness in the world — to help especially our missionaries; (b) to do away with discrimination because of race, religion, etc.; (c) to bring justice and freedom to all peoples everywhere; (d) we sympathise with movements which oppose the use of force for political ends (but we deplore the “guerilla” development.) In short, we stand up with others for human rights, relying on the respect which Christ has taught us for every human being. But (e) we repeat that it is not right to reduce the practice of the Catholic Faith simply to the service of one’s neighbour. As priests it is our duty to teach brotherhood, but it is first and foremost our duty to preach the message we have received from Christ. “The fact that so many priests shrink from the Gospel message of prayer and mortification seems to be one of the main reasons why our Catholic community suffers such internal strife. As Fr. Cardijn said, ‘the world needs supernatural priests, optimists because of that indestructible joy peculiar to their priestly apostolate’ ”.

We hope that our bishops will listen to us also, and not let themselves be too much influenced by the Pastoral Council’s report and the opinions voiced at this gathering. We have come here because our conscience is seriously troubled. We would consider it a grave sin of negligence on our part if we did not do all we can in the present circumstances to witness to our beliefs.

Here follow concrete suggestions to help to restore the balance of the Church in the Netherlands — “by way of a ‘handshake’ to initiate a meaningful dialogue”.

I. “Should not the Pastoral Council state clearly how much it intends to follow the lines of Vatican II — as the Dutch bishops had promised; this would imply remaining faithful to the essence of the priesthood as defined in Rome?”

2. "Is it not desirable that the Pastoral Council should express its great appreciation of priests who remain true to their plighted word to put all their energy into the spreading of God's Kingdom through a life of priestly celibacy?"

3. "Perhaps we may suggest to the bishops that they issue a pastoral letter explaining the teaching of the Church regarding the purpose and value of the priesthood today, as many foreign bishops have already done. So we expect from our shepherds a clear call encouraging all priests to remain true to their *freely chosen* state of celibacy, and to make it more precious by prayer and recollection, by conversion of heart and readiness for service to the People of God — in faithfulness to the Gospel."

4. "With regard to the possibility of a serious shortage of priests in the future, we would like to point in the same direction as Vatican II; that besides priests and pastoral helpers, *married deacons* should also help."

5. "We would also urgently request — in the name of thousands of perturbed laity — that under no conditions whatsoever should so-called 'inter-communion' be allowed against the law of the Church; or if it is detrimental to the reality of faith in the sacramental priesthood or in the Holy Eucharist."

6. "Should not this Pastoral Council institute an inquiry into the continually voiced complaint that our *publicity media* more or less regularly refuse to allow any other than progressive opinions to be heard? Why must those who honestly wish to remain true to Church and Pope — in spite of a continually lauded pluriformity — still have to beg for an equal place in the publicity media?"

7. "In conclusion, we declare our fidelity to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and our reverent obedience to the Supreme Shepherd and Teacher of the Church, Pope Paul VI."

## CURRENT COMMENT

In this article, Father Crane examines the reaction of the French Bishops to the deplorable state of affairs in their country, where the priesthood is concerned. How can these shepherds be so blind?

He tells the story, too, of the campaign in favour of abortion in the French Catholic Press early this year and condemns his Jesuit brethren on the staff of "Études" for their part in this disgraceful affair.

# The Making of a Harlot

THE EDITOR

NOT long ago, a commentator in the *Catholic Herald* (2/2/73) wrote of the many Catholics in France who disliked what he described as the reforms which had followed the Vatican Council, but which are better spoken of in most cases as innovations which have been introduced — very often in defiance of its teaching or in a manner calculated to distort it. The results have been catastrophic, where the Faith in France is concerned. The figures speak for themselves. They are given here, as reported by the correspondent of *Figaro*, from the working paper presented by Msgr. Frétière at the meeting of the French Bishops, which took place at Lourdes in October, 1972.

### *A Bishop on the Priesthood*

Monsieur Bourdarias summed up in *Figaro* the Bishop's findings as follows. The comparison is between 1963, the second year of the Vatican Council, and 1971, a relatively brief span of eight years; which makes Msgr. Frétière's figures not merely startling, but catastrophic — to everyone, apparently, but himself, as we shall see later on. Here, now, are the Bishop's findings (as given word for word

in the *Figaro* report of M. Bourdarias, within quotation marks; as summarised, without quotation marks):

“ . . . a very great drop in the number of young men preparing for the priesthood. In 1963, in junior seminaries or high schools there were 15,702 thinking forward to the priesthood. In 1971, there were 5,474 (drop of 65 per cent.). In houses for late vocations, there were 732 in 1963, but only 77 in 1971 (drop of 89 per cent.). In the *Grands Seminaries* (major seminaries) there were, in 1963, 5,279, but in 1971 only 2,840 (drop of 47 per cent.). The downturn in ordinations follows the same general movement. They went from 573 in 1963 to 237 in 1971 (drop of 58 per cent.).”

At the same time the clergy excess of deaths over “births” went from 161 in 1965, to 465 in 1970. But that is not all; we have to take into account also the drop-out of priests who have left their ministry; this is now a very significant proportion. The figures given are as follows: 1965, 45 priests left the priesthood; 1967, 86 priests left; 1969, 145 priests left; in 1971, all but the round figure of 200. With regard to this last total, the point is made that 40 of them were men ordained barely three years, between 1967 and 1970.

So, in France in 1975, there will be 31,820 priests against 41,000 ten years before, and on condition that there are no new defections in between. Even more serious — men less than 45 years old now, will drop from 16,000 to 5,000 over the same ten-year period. One must ask, as does the paper, *Aurore*, whether there will be any priests left in 20 to 25 years time in France, especially when you know that this year 82 dioceses registered less than 10 candidates for senior training (in major seminaries) and 10 dioceses did not have any applicants at all.

The state of the Church in France, as revealed in these few figures is, quite obviously, appalling; but the most appalling thing of all is that the last person in the



world to find it appalling is, apparently, Msgr. Frétière. His Lordship went on, after revealing these dreadful figures, to put forward a series of remedies which, with all due respect, I can only describe as fatuous. The commentator here is Pierre Debray, a French Catholic journalist, in an article translated into English for the issue of *Faith* <sup>(1)</sup> for January/February of this year:

“Mgr. Frétière shows himself a determined optimist, however, always the sign of a happy disposition. The basic solution is simple. Since the seminaries are empty, close them, and ‘meet up again with people in their real life, in the bosom of the various natural human groups, instead of always trying to start from existing institutions’. Let us multiply formation circles ‘where young men who have in mind to consecrate themselves to the priesthood, will live immersed in ‘the environment of real life’ in the ‘workers world’ for some, in the university for others. At all times, according to Msgr. Frétière, the ‘revolution of mentality’ which is at work in the Church will allow of the constitution of ‘authentic communities of the People of God, where priests, men and women religious, and laity assume in co-responsibility the mission of the Church’. Certain commentators have concluded from this that we end up with a married clergy (in France), perhaps of women priests as well. But the dynamism of Mgr. Frétière’s proposals seems to lead him much further still, even if he is not conscious of it . . .” (in other words, to the elimination, as unnecessary, of the priesthood.—Ed.)

### *Signifying Nothing*

These recommendations of Msgr. Frétière add up, I am afraid to nothing. They mean nothing. They appear as the outpourings of one who has fled from reality to find refuge in words — like religious who go on nattering

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(1) Bi-monthly at 12p a single copy and 90p a year from Rev. Alan Wilders, Delce Grange, Maidstone Road, Rochester, Kent. Highly recommended.

about "openness" from the midst of the shambles, which secularization and the abandonment of prayer and discipline have made of their community. This, I think, is the really frightening thing; to find a man — and a bishop, to boot — so trapped in and by his illusions that he is mentally incapable of shedding them, even when confronted with the devastating effects of their application to real life. Msgr. Frétière's reaction to the devastation is to seek refuge in his illusions to an even greater extent than before, applying, by way of remedy, yet stronger doses of the poison which brought near-death in the first place, protesting, as he does so, that the patient is well on the way to the full restoration of health. Bishop Frétière's remedy for the emptying of France's seminaries — brought about by the whole futile approach of himself and his episcopal colleagues in the first place — is quite simple. Close them; and then they will be empty no more. It is, you see, as easy as that! Cure the patient by killing him and proclaim, as you do so, that he is not really dead, but well on the way to new life. Hence his talk of "authentic communities" and so on; an example here of the euphoria that takes hold of those who preside over decay, the excited and meaningless talk that seizes them when they see the substance of their hopes in collapse, the chatter that pours from the headquarters of religious orders today as they see their numbers shrinking to nothing because of foolish, post-conciliar policies, which added up to no more than mere "chat" in the first place.

### *The True Remedy is There*

For the true remedy is there, staring the Bishop in the face. This is what makes the whole situation — in France and, indeed, elsewhere — so desperate; this is why one has to write as one does. Msgr. Frétière and his episcopal colleagues are *blind*. What else can one say of a body of men who have the remedy for a desperate situation before their eyes, yet appear totally unable to see it. In the words of Pierre Debray; "Let him find a man

who will reopen his seminary and provide a staff of orthodox, sober professors. Let him establish it in piety, discipline, the life of prayer and the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. In a very short time his seminary will be bursting at the seams". The objection comes at once: it is all very well to write like this, but the whole thing is speculation. How then do I know that this is the true remedy? Because it has been shown to be true by Msgr. Marcel Lefebvre at Econne in the Diocese of Sion in Switzerland, where he has been permitted to open a seminary, run on traditional lines, but with a practical eye to present circumstance, as must always be the case and, in fact, usually was in the last years before the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Last year thirty-five candidates (three-quarters of them French) went to join the thirty already there, making sixty-five in all. Econne is now bursting at the seams, forced to expand through weight of numbers; whilst in France, at the same time, eighty-two dioceses register less than ten candidates for senior seminary training, and ten have not got any candidates at all. What would a sane man conclude from this comparison? That Archbishop Lefebvre is *right* and the rest of the French Bishops *wrong* — as simple as that, on the basis of the evidence. Therefore, if the French Bishops want to fill their seminaries, what they have to do is return them to the Faith and discipline of their Fathers, cutting out, meanwhile, the kind of talk which professes to find hope for the future in "Authentic communities of the People of God . . . (assuming) in co-responsibility the mission of the Church".

The remedy, then, is being lived out in real life, in a Swiss diocese, before the eyes of the French Bishops. One would have thought it now so obviously presented to them that not one of them in his senses could possibly miss it. Yet, apparently, the French Bishops have missed it. Would it be grossly impertinent to ask, as gently as possible and with all the respect one can summon, whether the French Bishops have taken leave of their senses? I write this in no scoffing manner, but quite sincerely. Are

the French Bishops deluded to the point where they can, in fact, no longer see what is patently obvious to simple priests and laymen? And not only the French Bishops, but those of some other countries as well; as, for example, the Dutch. And not only bishops, but, particularly, higher superiors over men and women in religious life. One notices in all of them the same paralysed inability to see the remedy for the chaos that prevails in their communities and congregations, even when that remedy is there before their very eyes. Either this or, seeing the remedy, they are without the courage to enforce it; fearful that were they to insist on a return to prayer and religious observance as twin conditions of renewal they would be laughed out of court by the mannerless progressives in their communities, who ought, in fact, to have been sent packing long ago. Instead, these have been not merely tolerated, but, in some cases, set by fearful superiors in positions where they can infect their brethren and corrupt the life of their Religious Order or Congregation — all, of course, in the name of renewal and reform. Everything they do, they tell us, everything they advocate is in “the spirit of Vatican II”. My advice to them is that they should concentrate on its letter.

### *The Damage Continues*

Meanwhile, the damage continues. Noviceships as well as seminaries are almost empty. And no wonder. Take a look at bearded Father Buttend or clumsily mini-skirted Sister Fish, living it up at a protest meeting in Trafalgar Square, and who, in the name of God, would want to join up with the likes of them. The pointless spontaneity which they profess as expressive of their contrived search for authenticity, strikes most outsiders as an excuse for feckless living and nothing more. There is no appeal here to the young, no appeal whatsoever: “Nobody”, wrote Henri Fesquet in *Le Monde* for October 29th, “would get very happily on a ship whose crew did not know where it was bound, why the anchor was raised or whose hand is

on the tiller". How obvious all this is — to everyone except the bishops and those in authority in religious life. They, apparently, are blind to the obvious. One can come to no other conclusion. There is need, great need, for the Holy Ghost to work overtime in the Church today.

### *The Failure of the Bishops*

Pierre Debray — the French Catholic journalist already mentioned in this article — heads, at the moment, a newly formed association in France, which calls itself, *Rassemblement des Silencieux de l'Eglise*. The name speaks for itself, but cannot easily be put into English. I suppose it is best, yet still somewhat limply translated as "The Association of the Church's Silent Majority"; an organisation formed from that large number of ordinary Catholics, faithful men and women in every country and every walk of life, who have been disinclined to speak out in the present or, for that matter, any controversy within the Church, for the very good reason that they have left the speaking to appropriate ecclesiastical authority, whose business it is to speak and speak with authority on the problems that have beset the Church since the closure of the Second Vatican Council. Now, however, it is becoming very clear to them that appropriate ecclesiastical authority — in France and, indeed, in many other countries — has no apparent intention of speaking out in defence of the truth — either because it is frightened to do so — as was the case with the Bishops of England at the time of the Reformation, when only St. John Fisher stood his ground like a man — or because some bishops and others have, in fact, made that mental surrender, which places them now within the neo-modernist ranks. Mostly, I fear, they are afraid, terrified of the unpopularity a stand would bring, terrified of the irreverent and irrelevant few in the Church today, who assault everything the Bishops are supposed to stand for in the name of bringing new "dynamism" to what the Progressives so arrogantly (and so ignorantly) refer to as a hitherto stagnant



Church. Afraid and terrified of being called reactionary by a strident group of progressive priests and religious, preferring to be *au fait* with a few noisy dissidents rather than fall victim to their clumsy scorn, too many bishops have chosen to remain silent in face of outrageous progressive attacks on the Church. As a result, the silent majority of fine, decent laymen and women, along with their priests, have been forced to suffer the agony of seeing the Faith eroded before their eyes in order that dissident Progressives, who are working the damage, may not seem to suffer disfavour at episcopal hands. The policy is one of appeasement. We know where it brought this country when it reached its climax under Neville Chamberlain in 1938. We would be cowardly and failing in our duty if we did not point out that the same will happen to the Church, if bishops are not as mindful of their duty in this century as St. John Fisher was of his some four and a half centuries ago. Let us face it. Too many bishops in too many countries to day have fallen victim to the policy of sparing the shepherd and striking the flock, which clerical and religious dissidents have employed everywhere with conspicuous success since the end of Vatican II. Everywhere in the Church hungry sheep have looked up and have not been fed because too many shepherds have been engaged in busy dialogue with the wolves; cries for food, under such circumstances, tend to be treated as divisive.

### *The Silent Majority has had Enough*

In France, it would seem that the Silent Majority has now had enough. Having looked to their bishops for a lead and found themselves stranded in a *cul-de-sac*, France's Catholics — the ordinary, decent laymen and women of the country — have started to come together. They are alarmed, it would appear, by two things in particular — the way in which a liberal element in their midst has thrust unwanted and rootless liturgical change on them in the most illiberal manner possible; secondly, the way in which the progressive few in France are identifying the

Church's mission with the establishment on this earth of, God help them, a Socialist way of life and, in consequence, identifying Catholic Action with political commitment to the classless society. There has been a great deal of this latter in France these past months, crazy clerics and daffy nuns have been busier than ever in this field, as I have had occasion to point out in a series of articles written last year for *Christian Order*.

Recently, the trend has taken a turn which reveals it as not merely nonsenical, but, in fact, exceedingly dangerous and, indeed, sinister to a pronounced degree. The story sounds unbelievable. It is, I regret to say, only too true. At the time of writing, it has not yet made the Catholic Press in this country, for reasons that some will find only too patent when the story is told. It needs to be told. It is absolutely essential that it should be.

### *An Unholy Alliance*

By way of background, readers need to be reminded of the unpleasant possibility that, by the time this article is published, the Left may have gained political power as a result of the elections to be held in France in March; and by the Left we mean the unlovely combination of Monsieur Mitterand's Socialists with the Communist Party of Monsieur Marchais. The accession to political power of this unpleasant combination of political forces is what France's way-out, left wing Catholics greatly desire. The target they are after is made up of the uncommitted and the waverers in France's Catholic ranks, still holding back from the final plunge that would make them allies of what is best called "The Revolution". The task, then, for the way-out Progressives in France is to break down the last barriers that would deny the Socialist-Communist Alliance as large a slice as possible of the Catholic vote.

One such barrier for many French Catholics is that clause in the joint Socialist-Communist Programme which says that, if and when they come to power, existing "repressive" legislation against abortion will be repealed.

With this in mind I now ask whether it is more than a coincidence that, from the beginning of December of last year, the French Catholic Press suddenly — and as if by a concerted effort — should have mounted a campaign in favour of abortion and that, crowning the whole ugly business as it were, *Etudes* — the Review published by the French Jesuits — should have come out disgustingly in its January number in favour of this horrible practice and on the basis of a supposed philosophical distinction, which, one feels, even a semi-literate teenager would recognise at once as utterly bogus.

### *Three Things to Notice*

There are three things to notice in this context. In the first place, what I have said is true. Let the reader who wants to satisfy himself on this point (and I would not blame him for wanting to, for the whole affair is so unbelievably degrading and unworthy) read what Pere Gallay has to say in *La Croix* for December 16th; Gwendoline Jarczyk in *France Catholique* for December 22nd; let him go on to read *Le Monde* for January 3rd and *L'Express* for January 8th, which published an interview with Pere Bruno Ribes, S.J., Director of *Etudes*, under the headlined title, "The Jesuits Allow Abortion"; then let him, if he can stomach it, read the January number of *Etudes*, which will have had, I imagine, a greatly increased readership after all this propaganda in its favour.

This is the first thing that has to be noticed — the propaganda campaign launched by the Catholic Press in favour of abortion — and, most disgracefully of all, by the Jesuit Review, *Etudes* — is true. There is no doubt whatsoever about it.

In the second place, this propaganda campaign in favour of abortion is in direct defiance of the teaching of the Church on this subject, which Pope Paul VI last defined in his address to Catholics jurists on December 9th of last year, 1972; which definition, as outlined by Paul VI, was identical, naturally enough, with the pro-

nouncement of Pope Pius XII on October 29th, 1951, in which abortion, once again, was condemned. And, so far as the French Bishops are concerned, their pronouncement on this point, however surprising it may seem, was unequivocal and made for them all by Cardinal Renard on November 28th, 1972. "Abortion", said His Eminence, "is murder. Has not God said, 'Thou shalt not kill'?" The teaching is clear and the defiance of that teaching is, thereby, made clear. In this case it adds up to no more and no less than unholy, premeditated defiance of papal authority, disgraceful in any Catholic, disgusting in a Jesuit by reason of his Fourth Vow of obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff.

### *The Making of a Harlot*

The third and final thing that has to be said is that the whole of this sordid business appears to me still more disgraceful, if I am right in my assumption that the propaganda by France's Catholic Press in favour of abortion was at the instance of way-out, left-wing Progressives in the Church, anxious that Catholics should vote for the Socialist-Communist Alliance and determined, therefore, to take Catholic waverers over the hurdle represented by the undertaking of the Alliance that, if elected, it would repeal legislation against abortion. If this was the real motive of the way-out Catholic Left in mounting the recent press campaign in favour of abortion, then we have here an appalling event to record — the law of God broken for the sake of ideological advantage; the lives of the unborn sacrificed in the name of political expediency of the lowest and most disreputable support. This kind of thing makes Herod's killing of the Innocents look like a Sunday School picnic and, where France herself is concerned, it means no more and no less than the downgrading of the eldest daughter of the Church to the level of a common harlot.

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# Phase Two

J. M. JACKSON

THE Government recently announced its proposals to follow the wage freeze. This second phase provides for limited increases in pay and for continuing restrictions on prices and profits. There is to be a third phase in which a Prices Commission and a Pay Commission will operate, guided by a code drawn up by the Treasury after consultation with interested parties and approved by Parliament. In this article, I want to examine some of the problems raised by the particular formula adopted for the control of wage and salary increases, and the fundamental problems involved in holding down wages if at least some prices continue to rise. There are already signs (at the time of writing) that there may be considerable trade union opposition to the proposals. No doubt, by the time the article appears, it will have become clearer just how great that opposition and what form it will take. It is, however, well worthwhile at this stage examining the proposals critically in order to see whether it is reasonable to oppose them, and also to ask what form of opposition to them is justifiable.

## *The Pay Formula*

The Government has decided that during this second phase the amount of pay increases will be limited to £1 plus 4 per cent,<sup>1</sup> subject to a maximum increase of £250 a year. It is not suggested that everybody should get an increase exactly reflecting this formula. The formula is intended to apply to any group of employees. So we may have a small firm employing a hundred workers and paying an average wage of £30 a week. The firm will be permitted to raise its wage bill by £100 (£1 per worker) plus 4 per

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1. The calculation is based on the wage bill excluding overtime payments.



cent of the total wage bill. This represents another £120. Thus a total increase of £220 is available for distribution. The firm may agree to give an increase of £2.20 to each of its hundred workers. Alternatively, it could give each worker £1 plus 5 per cent. This would still mean £2.20 or just over 7 per cent to somebody earning the average wage of £30. But somebody earning £20 a week would get a smaller increase of £1.80, though it would in fact represent 9 per cent of his smaller salary. Similarly, somebody who had been earning £40 a week would get an increase of £2.60 or 6.5 per cent. On the other hand, there could be an agreement that gave everybody an increase of just over 7 per cent. The £30 a week man would get £2.20 as before, but now the £20 a week man would have his increase limited to £1.46 whilst the £40 a week man would get £2.92.

One of the main questions which has to be decided is whether in a period such as this one should continue to allow increases which are in percentage terms or whether a formula should be used which favours the lower paid workers. This in practice probably means a choice between the kind of formula the Government has chosen for determining the total increase in the wage bill, a combination of a flat rate element and a percentage one, or a simple flat rate formula (which would be more favourable to the lower paid). One could envisage formulae that would be still more favourable to the lower paid, but these are unlikely to be accepted in practice and are not therefore considered further. The answer which we reach to this question is essentially an answer for a particular point of time. What is appropriate at one period of time may not be appropriate at another. It may, for example, be felt that at a particular point of time, perhaps the present time being one such, that flat rate increases favouring the lower paid should be the general rule. The adoption of this formula over a long period, however, could well destroy the real value of differentials to the point where there was no adequate reward for workers with greater skill or responsibility. (Initially a skilled worker might

receive £30 a week and an unskilled worker £20. This gap may be felt to be unduly wide, and a series of flat rate increases may be given. After some years the two wage rates may stand at £40 and £30 respectively. But in the meantime, prices may have risen by 25 per cent. This means that the higher wages are really worth the same as £32 and £24 at the original date. The series of flat rate increases has not only raised the pay of the unskilled worker from 67 to 75 per cent of that of the skilled man, it has reduced the purchasing power of the differential between them by 20 per cent. It may well be felt by this time that the differential is only just adequate and that future pay awards may need to be on a percentage basis.)

### *Pay and Prices*

One of the considerations at the present time is that we must expect some prices to continue rising. I will return to the more general issue of the relative severity of the controls on wages and prices later. For the moment, what matters is that it is food prices that are most likely to rise, and that these increases have a proportionately greater effect on the lower paid. This is because the lower paid tend to spend a higher proportion of their incomes on food and other basic necessities of life. In the Index of Retail Prices, the so-called cost of living index, food prices represent about a quarter of the total. So if all prices are held constant except food, where there is a 10 per cent increase, the cost of living index will have risen by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. The index, however, does not represent the cost of living for any particular group in the community. Rather, it represents the overall changes in the cost of a collection of goods which is an average of the expenditure patterns of a wide range of households, differing in composition and income. We might find that a man earning only £20 a week would spend more than £5 on food — let us say £7.50. A man with 40, however, might spend rather less than a quarter of his income

on food — perhaps only £9. A 10 per cent rise in food prices will have a more serious affect on the lower paid man. It will involve him in an increased expenditure of 75p, which is  $3\frac{3}{4}$  per cent of his income; for the £40 a week man, his food expenditure rises by 90p which is only  $2\frac{1}{4}$  per cent of his income.

Suppose that both men get a 5 per cent pay increase. The £20 a week man gets £1, and this leaves him 25p a week after meeting the increased cost of food. The £40 a week man gets a £2 increase, which leaves him with £1.10 to spend after meeting the increased cost of food.

At the present time, there are several reasons why we should favour a formula for pay increases that favours the lower paid. It will inevitably be a matter of individual opinion whether that formula should be a flat rate one (which is the more favourable to the lower paid) or the kind of mixed formula the Government has announced.<sup>2</sup> There is a problem of low pay, quite apart from any current trends in price levels. There has been an increasing awareness of the fact that a large number of men in full time employment are earning a wage that is not enough to enable them to support a family in reasonable comfort: in fact, the earnings of many men are such that they are worse off than many households on social security benefits. Such families may be helped by Family Income Supplement, if they care to apply, and they may be helped still more in the future by the proposed tax credit scheme. Nevertheless, it can be argued that this should be unnecessary and we ought to be thinking in terms of ensuring that an ordinary working man should be able to *earn* an adequate wage. Secondly, there is the fact already mentioned, that food prices are likely to rise while other prices remain fairly stable, and this will impose a bigger burden on the lower paid. The reason for this, which must

2. Though, as stated, the Government formula applies to the total wage bill for a group of workers; the formula applied to the pay of workers within the group could be a flat rate, which would be more favourable to the lower paid, or a uniform percentage increase, which would be less favourable to them.

be examined, is that it is impracticable or undesirable to control the prices of fresh foods.

### *Wages in the Longer Term*

A wage freeze may be a necessary measure in a crisis. It is not an equitable measure. Some workers get increases just before the freeze whilst others looking for comparable increases are denied them. In a situation such as the present, those who are caught by the freeze may be left behind even when it is relaxed. Consider two groups of workers, both of whom were earning some little time ago £30 a week. One of these groups succeeded in getting a 15 per cent wage increase before the freeze was imposed. They will now be receiving £34.50 a week. The second group was caught in the freeze, so that they remained on £30 a week. They might well be up to three months behind the other group in getting an increase, and they would also be limited by the phase II conditions in the amount they could get. It might well be that the Government formula and the way it was applied in the particular industry would limit them to, say, a 7 per cent increase, that is £2.10. So in addition to the delay they are left £2.40 a week behind the other group for perhaps a substantial period. Some anomalies of this sort may be inevitable in tackling the serious threat of inflation, but, if so, it is essential that the anomalies and injustices should be recognised and that a long term policy should be maintained in which rigid controls continue to be applied to those who were able to go ahead by beating the freeze.

Even if the application of the Government formula in the second phase does favour the lower paid to some degree, it may also create anomalies between workers, both high and low paid. The formula permits an increase in pay which depends on the average earnings in the particular sector. Suppose there are two groups of a hundred workers each, and that average earnings are £30 a week in one and £35 in the other. In the first, the formula allows a £220 in the total wage bill and in the other £240.

Suppose that in the former case, each worker is given an increase of £1 plus 4 per cent of his previous wage whilst in the second industry everybody gets a flat rate increase of £2.40. Consider two workers who have been receiving £20 a week. In the first industry, such workers will be given an increase that brings them to £21.80 whilst in the others these workers will go to £22.40. Workers in the second industry will have gone ahead of those who were previously level with them.

At all levels of pay there are existing anomalies, and the kind of policy that is now proposed to follow the freeze will do nothing to reduce these, and may even increase them.

### *Fresh Food Prices*

There are a good many reasons why some people may be critical of the Government's proposals. Apart from the difficulties referred to above, the main objection seems to be that price controls will be less effective than wage controls and that some prices will not be controlled at all. It remains to be seen whether the general control of prices will be more or less effective than the control of wages. Given that some measures of control over both are necessary, it would seem more reasonable to accept the policy and to wait and see how effectively it is enforced. There remains, however, the fact that fresh food has been left entirely outside the system of control and that some council rents are being increased as a result of government policy. In addition, it is expected that some prices will rise as a result of VAT, although some of those raising this objection ignore the fact that VAT is replacing Purchase Tax and Selective Employment Tax, and that while some prices will rise others should fall.

There is clearly nothing we can do to prevent the rise in price of those foodstuffs we buy on international markets. If supply is scarce, we either pay the world price or go without. We could, of course, control the price of any home produced supplies. We could control the price



of British beef and also ban the export of such beef. The recent sharp rise in the price of beef, however, is a reflection of an acute scarcity. It might be possible for the Government to keep the price down by rigid controls; and where foodstuffs are imported the price to consumers could be kept down by subsidies. Nevertheless, such a policy would be disastrous.

Given that the supply is scarce, and price was controlled at something close to its former level, demand too would remain at the same level as before. The supply would not be there to match the demand. Housewives would come to the butcher's shop intending to make their usual purchase but be unable to do so. The Government would either have to institute a formal rationing scheme or the trade would introduce an informal one, with supplies going either to favoured customers or to those who were willing to pay over the odds.

In so far as supplies are imported, the subsidisation of food prices would have another undesirable effect. The very fact that prices here would be held down by subsidisation would keep the level of demand on the world market that much higher and increase not only the Government's expenditure on subsidies but also its expenditure in foreign exchange.

### *The Form of Opposition*

In a free democratic society, it is open to anyone to disagree with the Government's analysis of the situation and the remedies it has proposed. The kind of proposal that has been put forward is certainly acceptable only as a temporary measure. What is certain, however, is that it is in the long run quite incompatible with the preservation of such a free society that any section of the community should claim the right to carry its opposition to these measures on by means that go beyond the normal democratic processes. The right to free collective bargaining is not a right that is absolute and can ignore the public interest in wage settlements that do not lead to inflation.

# Vietnam: The Great Puzzle

NGUYEN NGOC PHACH

The Vietnam war, despite massive coverage by the news media, and particularly by television, remains a puzzle to many people. In the following slightly abridged article from a paper given at the Third Asian Press Seminar, Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Phach, a South Vietnamese journalist now serving in the army, tries to solve some elements of the puzzle.

The author is well qualified as a writer on the war. He has been a translator and publisher, has worked on the B.B.C. in London, has contributed to a number of European journals, and has been on the staff of Vietnamese papers and the National Broadcasting system.

This article was written last Spring, 1972. We published it — by courtesy of *Social Survey* — because of the excellence of its point of view and its relevance to the present situation.

FOR a quarter of a century, the Indochina crisis has continued unabated, giving journalists covering it innumerable big puzzles which no one has ever been able to decipher early enough. Indeed, when it started out in 1945, the consensus was general among the Saigon Press Corps that Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, the first post-war French proconsul, would be able to restore French sovereignty over the peninsula within a few months' time. Nevertheless, nine years later, a quarter of a million French Union soldiers left "the jewel of the French Empire" in an atmosphere closer to defeat than victory.

The Communists, who had led the resistance movement to success, were then at their politico-military climax. Under Ho Chi Minh, they had solid control over the Northern half of Vietnam and thousands of cadres operating semi-overtly in Laos, Cambodia, and strife-ridden South Vietnam. Ho and his followers could very well dream of the time when they would gain control over all of Indochina a couple of years hence.

### *Puzzle for Everyone*

Indochina, however, was to be a puzzle for the Reds, too. Within months after a ceasefire agreement was reached in mid-1954, Ngo Dinh Diem, first as Prime Minister then as President of the Republic of (South) Vietnam, succeeded in consolidating his rule and strengthening his régime. The southern realm, against practically everybody's expectations, grew stronger and stronger. Ho Chi Minh's dream remained a dream.

It was then Diem's turn to get lost. In more than one way the father of his nation, the man whom Australian author Denis Warner called "the last Confucian", was truly unhappy to find no gratitude among those he ruled with paternalistic concern. In late 1960, a military *putsch* was staged which Diem managed to repress neatly but which undoubtedly marked the beginning of the end for his Confucian rule three years later. In the meantime, Ho and his lieutenants had completed their preparations for the conquest of the South from within. After creating the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), the Hanoi leaders ordered their followers to go on the offensive.

Diem counter-attacked with the strategic hamlet program. In his reckoning, if the people could be isolated from enemy agents, the Viet Cong would necessarily fade away, being unable to live among the population as fish in water. Diem's ideas were probably sound, but his authoritarian manners antagonized quite a few South Vietnamese and their friends abroad.

## *Crisis*

In May, 1963 a comparatively unimportant religious incident, in which some Buddhist followers were killed in Hue, started a string of upheavals that resulted in Diem's overthrow. The southern republic entered a period of intense crisis, which culminated in the semi-overt invasion of Southern Indochina by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and the massive U.S. military intervention.

By the mid-sixties, the Indochina conflict had grown into a major international war with over a million allied troops fighting against half-a-million Communists. This conflagration undoubtedly could have been won by allied forces if top strategists in Saigon and Washington had had a better perception of a proper strategy for this very particular military contest. But the limitations imposed on allied generals — e.g. no invasion of enemy base areas in Laos and Cambodia — were to keep the armies of South Vietnam and the United States and smaller contingents from Korea, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand at a strategic disadvantage.

For three years, the Allies won practically every big battle and inflicted on the enemy thousands of casualties each week; but they failed to weaken the Viet Cong capability to sustain the crisis. The conflict grew rapidly in intensity and so did a sense of futility that permeated an ever larger segment of public opinion, especially in America.

At that juncture came the Viet Cong's Tet offensive of 1968. Then, taking advantage of a holiday truce they themselves had proclaimed, communist fighters penetrated the cities of South Vietnam and staged the most dramatic offensive in the history of human conflict. The war, in a sense, was lost in Washington. First President Lyndon B. Johnson, then his successor, Richard M. Nixon, sought to extricate America from the moving sands of Indochina. Johnson offered to halt the bombing of North Vietnam and Nixon ordered the redeployment of U.S. troops from the operational theatre.

## *The New Face of War*

A half decade after Tet, U.S. participation in the war has grown from primordial to secondary. Although some 50,000 GIs are still in South Vietnam, they have practically left the arena, and it can be said that not many will be left here by the next U.S. Presidential elections.

To quote a Vietnamese pundit, "logically, the situation should have grown worse for Saigon. But the Indochina crisis defies logic and since the Viet Cong Tet offensive, there can be felt a constant improvement in Saigon's position. Two years after this unprecedented campaign, the South Vietnamese could afford to go to the help of their Cambodian allies and three years later hit at the umbilical cord of the communist war effort in Southern Laos".

Ho Chi Minh's heirs apparently have not subscribed to that line. For instead of coming to some kind of agreement at the marathon-like "peace" talks in Paris — which, in the wake of Tet, would have necessarily resulted in some communist participation in the political life of South Vietnam — they have devoted most of the last four years to preparing a massive attack that, in their reckoning, would necessarily result in the collapse of the "puppet" Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) now reduced to being on its own because of Nixon's redeployment scheme.

It is against this background of North Vietnamese intentions that one must view the lack of progress in Paris, where the only agreement reached in the course of 150 long sessions is on the shape of the negotiating table. It is also in this context that one must view the present NVA campaign which the Hanoi leaders are waging with practically everything they have in their arsenal.

Although over the last four years many people have been on the record to predict the Northerners would stage a couple of major military drives before resigning themselves to accepting a settlement, practically no one has foreseen the form and format of Hanoi's current (1972) "Spring-Summer" offensive. Indeed, when NVA forces



swept across the demilitarized zone in the final days of March, 1972, public opinion abroad was shocked by the intensity of their attack and the sophistication of their weaponry.

### *Tanks*

Most representative of this was the presence of some 600 or more tanks, most of them Russian-made T.54s, which Hanoi had managed to send not only to the Northern Quang Tri front but also to the triborder area and the Southern province of Binh Long, of which An Loc is the capital.

Against such a massive deployment of war material—which includes among others such weapons as surface-to-air missiles, 130 mm. howitzers, 1,000-pound flying bombs, and wire-guided and heat-seeking rockets—it was only natural to expect some setbacks for ARVN in the initial stage of the communist push. But three months after NVA tanks rolled down Highway One, the enemy blitzkrieg appears to have been stalled. The long-feared assault on Hue, the former imperial capital, seems at present beyond the capability of Hanoi's forces. Kontum in the highlands has proven a South Vietnamese victory. And An Loc probably will enter the history of warfare as one of the most valiant stands put up by any army anywhere and at any time. More significantly, since June 28, ARVN units have been on a major counter-offensive, which is likely to regain for Saigon control over Northern Quang Tri, the only province lost to the Communists during the 100 days of intense fighting.

### *Losses*

Predictions of a quick "kill" made in Hanoi and shared by quite a few journalists who came to Saigon to witness the last days of the Southern realm can be said to have been contradicted by actual developments. It is the reckoning of this writer that NVA losses—which even conservatively

should be estimated at 60,000 dead and wounded and an enormous amount of material, including some 500 tanks, destroyed or captured — cannot be easily made up for, thus barring a second wave of NVA attacks of the intensity recorded during the April-May period.

War developments during the past four years, of course, constitute another puzzle for a great many observers. But put against the new strategic verities of Vietnam, they should have been expected. According to General Cao Van Vien, the chief of the Joint General Staff, the Indochina war "has been essentially reduced to a war of logistics with the enemy trying to keep his supply channel open and Allied forces endeavouring to sever it". Of course, Gen. Vien also conceded in an article written for the *U.S. Military Review* early this year, "now and again" there might be an upsurge in fighting, but it can be said that unless something truly out of the ordinary should take place — e.g. an open invasion through the demilitarized zone — such high points of enemy activities will not result in reversing the situation to his favour".

### *Low Morale*

Moreover, in the top South Vietnamese military commander's view, "the communist war apparatus has turned different from what it used to be. No longer can it be described as a tightly-knit politico-military organization based on a close alliance between the masses and their defenders. Isolated from the bulk of the people and kept apart from one another, NVA units are now only pale reflections of their old selves. This point of verity is most visible in the rather low morale of the individual communist soldier, which the enemy high command has tried to offset by greater reliance on material means".

For Gen. Vien and his associates at headquarters there was thus no surprise at the form and format of the NVA offensive. They had known for some time that the many-phased conflict had turned into a logistics war and had done their best to win it. They had also reckoned that the

NVA had turned into a conventional army with growing reliance on material means rather than "man and his political thoughts" as suggested by Mao Tse-tung.

### *A Country of South Vietnam*

Fortunately for Vien and the 1.1 million men under him, for once policy-makers in Washington and Saigon saw eye to eye with them on the nature of the new conflict. President Nixon's order to blockade Northern ports and President Thieu's agreement with his generals to move most of South Vietnam's regular army divisions to endangered border regions seem to indicate a concurrence of view-points between the politicians and the military not too often noticed in the history of the long crisis.

Indeed, by ordering the mining of Haiphong and the destruction of the North Vietnamese road and rail systems, Nixon has done nothing but given a new illustrative example to the strategic tenet that had prompted the Allied incursions into Cambodia and Laos in 1970-71. On his part, by deploying his entire general reserves to the Northern front, Thieu has simply gone one more logical step from his claim that most of the countryside had been pacified. Battlefield developments during the past three months appear to have proven both Presidents right. Deprived of some of the supplies that would have reached Southern front lines without the U.S. blockade and air raids, the communist expeditionary corps has been badly battered. Meantime, most of the southern republic has remained relatively quiet in spite of reports of big war actions, which have generally been restricted to unpopulated frontier expanses, reflecting thereby the unpopular character of an alleged people's war and refuting Hanoi's boast of a conflict fought by the people, for the people, and with nothing but the people's means.

It follows that if the enemy's current drive had been staged five or six years ago — i.e. at a moment when "soldiers of the Revolution" could still live among the people as fish in water and to some extent claim to defend

them — he probably would have been able to attack Hue, cut South Vietnam into two along Route 19, take An Loc, and push onto Saigon. Indeed, in the early days of 1968, Viet Cong soldiers had few of the sophisticated weapons now in North Vietnamese hands, but they succeeded in bringing the war inside the Southern Republic's back gardens. Had the common people here been on their side, they would have won the victory for which they had been searching for two decades.

### *Pacification*

Tet, however, indicated that the South Vietnamese were not on the communist side. The immense strides made by the Saigon government in the field of pacification in the wake of this dramatic campaign also proves that the average citizen of this war-torn land would rather suffer innumerable hardships than accept *pax communista*. Still, probably entangled in the rigidity of their dogmatic view of things, the Hanoi leaders could not see through Tet, and ever since have been sinking deeper and deeper in their politico-military aberrations.

As a matter of fact, as early as the fall of 1968, General Vo Nguyen Giap, the Commander-in-Chief of all communist forces in Indochina, was reported to have acknowledged 500,000 NVA fatalities on southern battlefields. Since then, possibly more have died for the glory of his questionable military doctrine. Giap's present push necessarily will add countless more thousands to the list of North Vietnamese youths chosen by destiny "to be born in the North and to die in the South".

The claim by Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, the chief Viet Cong negotiator in Paris, that the fighting in Quang Tri has been done by Liberation Army formations, could only indicate a morbid sense of humour. That some people still find her statements believable could simply be described as indescribably preposterous.

To this effect, I cannot resist the temptation of quoting the text of a message sent by a London editorial office

to its man in Saigon on April 24, 1972 — i.e., at a time when the NVA drive appeared to have been checked along the Cua Viet River just a few miles from its starting point. This incredible cable reads as follows: "In view of rapidly worsening Vietnam situation, editor wants you to give top priority to a big piece on the plight of Saigon. He sees it as Berlin-type of situation with red forces closing in from all sides. The city built on American money where one could get anything from a missile to a beautiful girl. Now the whole infrastructure likely to be dismantled. David wants good hard colour-packed copy which would make spread. Repeat, must be serious but perhaps cynical to match mood of nation facing defeat and mood of Nixon in almost hopeless dilemma. Regards". David, the editor of that London paper, must have just read some of the statements issued by Mrs. Binh's information officers in Paris.

### Community

Far from spelling the end of South Vietnam, Hanoi's military effort can be said to have brought about a sense of communion between the Saigon leaders and the population. Indeed, like their estranged brothers in the North, the South Vietnamese have never liked any form of authority. The descendants of a special human species in whose eyes "*the prerogatives of the King must stop at the village gate*", they can be said to resent deeply any form of external pressure — please read, pressure from outside their own village community. This time, however, President Nguyen Van Thieu's fellow-countrymen seemed genuinely to commune with him when he declared last May 9: "If the country is to survive, so will every one of us. If the country is to collapse, so will every one of us. If we win, everything still may be ours. If the Communists win, everything will be lost, including the nation's independence, freedom, democracy, our very bodies and souls. . . ."

Nothing is more indicative of this attitude than what was seen in Quang Tri province in the critical month of



May. Of a population of some 300,000 prior to its fall, a quarter of a million persons chose to go South rather than stay with the Northerners. Those remaining simply did not have the time to leave, for since then, every time government forces entered the NVA-occupied sector, practically all those civilians who had stayed behind begged to be evacuated to government lines. The question must be asked, therefore, as to whether Hanoi's plan has not completely back-fired — not only militarily but psychologically and politically as well.

### *Refugees*

Indeed, Quang Tri is no exception. Over the past many years, whenever the NVA threat had grown intense somewhere, the civilians would do their best to go away. In recent months, countless residents of An Nhon, Dakto, Kontum have unhesitatingly abandoned all of their possessions in these communist-threatened townships for the hardships of refugee camps in government-controlled areas. Better still, in An Loc, which has just been through the most violent and sustained bombardment of the war, the blood of the people and their defenders can be said to have mixed in an epic of courage and abnegation that characterizes great historic moments.

Probably because of what he had seen on various battlefields, an American journalist opined at a recent symposium on the survival chances of South Vietnam: "You now can go out and find a country of South Vietnam. It certainly was not here five years ago". In other words, Tet and the current NVA push might have made the Republic of Vietnam into more than a geographical name. They might even be the main factors contributing to the making of South Vietnam.

It was also in the course of this debate that a French participant brought up what may be in the coming years the central point of interest for observers of Indochinese developments. In conclusion of his remarks, the man, who works for a Paris-based news magazine noted for its anti-

Saigon bias, said: "You may have won the war, but there still is a battle for peace and that is your big battle".

To have an idea of the social difficulties we are to be confronted with once the hostilities come to an end, let us simply look at Saigon. In this metropolis built for 500,000 inhabitants, there now are six times as many people. And of these three million, only some 20 per cent can be said to derive some comfort from the conditions in which they are breathing, eating, sleeping and working. Most of the other 80 per cent have to content themselves with sub-human living conditions. The foul slums you may have noticed on your drive from the airport to the downtown area constitute as many reminders to post-war administrators that, immediately after the last shot is heard, they must do their best to bring about a measure of social justice if the silence of the guns should be made to serve the cause of social harmony.

For a more accurate vision of this country's problems, I should like to invite you to have a look at the number of disabled veterans and war widows and orphans. Indeed, after so many years of struggle, there are now hundreds of thousands in each of these categories. Although the Government has started a most generous veteran policy, the great majority of these people are living at barely subsistence level.

The same can be said of most civil servants and military personnel, whose salaries have merely doubled while the cost of living has increased 1,000 per cent during the past ten years. There definitely is a big need for personal income redistribution.

Indeed, in spite of the abject poverty you may observe in some areas of this land and the blatant cases of social injustice that abound here, South Vietnam, strangely enough, can be said to have grown much richer during the past decade or so. Its formidable road and port systems, for example, can be pointed to to illustrate the point just made. That is also the case of quite a few of South Vietnam's citizens, for where there reigns a degree of normalcy, the peasants have never had it so good.

Motor cycles, TV sets, motorized boats are no longer restricted to a few homes. In An Giang, the most peaceful province of this country, electricity has reached the remotest hamlets. Even in Kien Hoa, the notorious birth-place of the Viet Cong movement, every other village has an electricity co-operative. When the land reform program is to be completed late this year or early next, the countryside of South Vietnam will put on a new face.

### *A Matter of Leadership*

In the short run, however, this nation's survival appears directly dependent on a reform of the local tax structure. While having to be more and more on their own in fighting the war, the South Vietnamese must also strive to achieve a greater degree of economic well-being and social justice. For quite a few reasons, this double task is popularly believed to stand a good chance of fulfilment through the adoption of a new tax structure geared to the socio-economic needs of a modern state. If measures aimed at the modernization and recodification of many areas of taxation could be devised and implemented successfully, a very good start would have been made for Saigon's struggle for peace.

Whatever the Government may propose to do, it can be safely assumed that a greater number of people will be required to pay more taxes. Obviously no one likes to pay taxes, but it is a fact of economic life that must be made acceptable to the citizens of Vietnam. Still, whether tax-payers are reluctant or willing to pay their dues to the State depends to a great extent on the style of leadership offered by the top echelons in each of the nation's economic sectors.

Following the phase of armed struggle, the Vietnam crisis certainly will grow less explosive but more complicated as it will encompass all the facets of this nation's life. In the years of transition ahead, good leadership may be the basic factor in any answer to South Vietnam's innumerable problems.